

COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES  
AREA STUDIES TOOLBOOK

A Research Paper

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## *Preface*

The Commonwealth of Independent States Area Studies ToolBook is intended to provide the reader with a broad overview of the twelve nation states which comprise the former Soviet Union. The target audience for the ToolBook is anyone with a requirement for background information on the leadership, system essentials, infrastructure, population, or fielded forces of any of the countries. We used Colonel (retired) John A. Warden's Five Rings model as our vehicle for analysis and packaged the results in a hypertext-linked ToolBook format to provide the information in a readable, user friendly, and easily understood format. There is also an historical section on each country, embedded within the overview section, to provide the user with contextual backdrop for current events. We additionally provided our own summary analysis of where each country may be headed in the near to medium term to provide food for thought for future planners.

The authors owe special thanks to Major Deborah Borio, our faculty research advisor, for her guidance and encouragement. Also most helpful in the research effort was Mr. Terry Hawkins, bibliographer for Eurasia at the Air University Library. The authors alone, however, are responsible for accuracy of the contents.

### *Abstract*

The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Area Studies ToolBook is an attempt to quantify a broad range of information about the twelve states which comprise the CIS. The authors of the ToolBook present and analyze this information on the leadership, system essentials, infrastructure, population, and military forces of each country in an attempt to inform the reader of some basic facts as well as draw some conclusions about the direction the states of the former Soviet Union are headed. The ToolBook employs Colonel (retired) John A. Warden's Five Rings analysis method to examine each area for each country and presents a summary analysis section to synthesize the information presented.

The implicit question the ToolBook seeks to answer is whether the CIS constitutes a threat to US interests in the near to mid-term future. To even the casual observer it would appear that political and economic upheaval have left the CIS states incapable of posing a threat even to any of their own number, let alone to anyone outside their borders. The ToolBook bears this conclusion out to a large degree with the possible exception of Russia, who as the successor to the lion's share of the military, and natural and manmade resources of the former Soviet Union, has demonstrated a proclivity toward playing first among equals within the CIS. The CIS as an organization, however, exercises only as much centralizing influence as its constituent members decide to accord it, and thus far

they have not accorded it much, preferring instead to develop independently of one another and cooperating only in those areas where it suits their individual interests.

The CIS Area Studies ToolBook does not provide an in-depth view of any single area, but rather is a broad analysis of facts and information, including history, which will aid any planner in better understanding the region.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Why a Commonwealth of Independent States Area Studies ToolBook? In the wake of the breakup of the Former Soviet Union (FSU) twelve new states have formed a nebulous entity called the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). (The three former Soviet Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are not members of the CIS.) A world used to dealing with the single superpower Soviet government must now deal with twelve separate states. Russia is somewhat familiar to many casual observers, but what of the other, more obscure republics which are now nation states in their own right? Does their instability pose a threat outside their own regions? And does Russia possess the same clout in world affairs as its Soviet predecessor?

When the Soviet Union dissolved, many assumed the need for expertise in the region would wane with Soviet power. On the contrary, the US is now faced with developing policy for remote regions with which few government or military specialists are familiar. New embassies must be staffed with politically, economically and militarily aware foreign service officers and military attachés. Businesses must assess their strategies for tapping new markets and accessing natural resources. Those who recommend or make decisions need accessible information closer at hand than the reference section of their local library.



The CIS Area Studies ToolBook is an attempt to provide those with a need for basic information and analysis in five essential areas: leadership, system essentials, infrastructure, population and military fielded forces. History being key to understanding and forecasting behavior, the ToolBook also includes a section on each country's past. The authors' goal was to provide information and analysis which would be useful to anyone with an information requirement on any of these aspects of the CIS. Among those who may find it especially useful will be government and military officials planning official travel to the region, planners responsible for military exercises (some of which have already been conducted in Russia and Ukraine), those responsible for administering foreign or military aid programs, and generally anyone requiring familiarity with this fascinating and critically important part of the world.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Methodology and Structure**

The Commonwealth of Independent States, like the Former Soviet Union, comprises an enormous land mass and a huge and enormously diverse population. The authors' challenge was how to capture this size and diversity in a single, integrated package broad enough for the layperson and deep enough for the already initiated. To deal with the mountain of information to be presented and analyzed, they chose Colonel (retired) John A. Warden's Five Rings model, which lends itself handily to country analysis and proved highly effective at handling the 12 countries comprising the CIS.

Warden's model posits that a system can best be analyzed by examining its constituent parts as a series of concentric rings, beginning with leadership at the center and radiating outward to system essentials, infrastructure, population and military fielded forces. Although Warden devised his model as a method for planning the attack of enemy systems, it suits the present purpose of analyzing the countries short of planning their destruction. The ring-formatted information and analysis presented in the ToolBook could, however, also serve as a basis for further contingency planning.

The authors further organized the ToolBook by dividing the twelve countries into four geographically logical regions. Russia, as by far the largest and most diverse republic, stands on its own. The Western republics comprise Belarus, Ukraine and

Moldova. The Transcaucasus consists of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Finally, Central Asia comprises the republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. This regional grouping does not imply any special relationship beyond geographical proximity between the countries in each, but rather was simply a convenient way to manage and present the information.

Five researchers then chose one area, or ring, each to research across the spectrum of all 12 target countries. This method allowed depth of understanding in the given ring and allowed for deeper comparison and analysis. A sixth researcher tackled the task of assembling a comprehensive overview of each republic, including information on climate, geography, topography, cities, and symbols. A brief, but comprehensive history of each country is also included in the overview section, giving historical context to current events. One of the authors, possessed of excellent technical skills, built the majority of the ToolBook itself. The eighth, a Russian Air Force officer, lent himself to all areas to verify information for accuracy and completeness. He also significantly aided the effort by researching Russian language sources.

A summary analysis of each country contains the essential kernels of information necessary for an analysis and some prescriptive advice for the West in how to deal with these new actors on the world stage. It is in this section and the sections labeled "Challenges" that the user will find the authors' analysis of the direction each country is headed in the near to medium term.

The Assymetrix ToolBook format proved ideal as a medium to present a copious amount of diverse information and analysis in a user friendly format. The hypertext link feature allows the user to pick his own path through the ToolBook, exploring those areas

germane to his area or level of inquiry. Incorporation of photographs and charts makes the ToolBook more informative, giving the user a visual appreciation for areas of exploration.

## Chapter 3

### Sources

The Commonwealth of Independent States is in a state of transition which will likely continue for some time to come. Some compare the current state of affairs in the region with the early 16th century Times of Troubles. Regardless of what one compares current events to, they are extremely difficult to keep up with and document in a timely fashion. Information that is accurate as of a certain date is often superseded within a matter of months, weeks, or even days. The authors chose November 1, 1995 as the cut off date for most of the research contained in the ToolBook, although some sections incorporate more current data.

Several sources provided the bulk of the information used, with a myriad of other publications filling in holes and adding depth. Major sources which proved most useful to the authors and may prove useful for further background information include:

*The World Factbook* 1995, published by the Central Intelligence Agency. Contains a wide variety of data on every country in the world. A good starting point for basic information and statistics.

*Jane's Sentinel, The Commonwealth of Independent States* 1995, published by Jane's Information Group. A cornucopia of information on each of the CIS Republics. Contains

sections on history, politics, international affairs, internal and external threats, geography, economy, and extensive defense information.

*Eastern Europe and the CIS ,1994 and The Europa World Year Book, 1995*, both published by Europa Publications. Both good, basic information sources for leadership, government, economy, and culture. No military information.

*Russia, Eurasian States and Eastern Europe, 1995*, from the World Today Series. Provides condensed summaries on each republic in a readable format. Very user friendly.

*Commonwealth of Independent States and Eastern Europe, 1993*, from Facts on File. The authors used this three year old publication as a source for basic information on topography and infrastructure, two areas least likely to experience rapid change.

*Atlas of Russia and the Independent Republics, 1994*, published by Simon and Schuster. Good source for geography, topography, natural resources, and infrastructure.

The Internet provided several sources, the Universal Resource Locators (URLs) for which are listed in the bibliography. These included not only sources found only on the Internet, but also on-line versions of basic research compendiums, making the ToolBook a true technology product.

The numerous periodical publications used provided up-to-date information on issues and challenges, particularly in those areas most susceptible to change like leadership and military fielded forces. See the bibliography for a listing.

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